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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 5 May 2010 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On the eve of the beginning of long-awaited and fragile proximity talks between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, we regret to inform you that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remains extremely precarious due to the illegal, violent and provocative policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, including acts of violence and terror by illegal Israeli settlers against the Palestinian civilian population. Israeli settlers, who are provided cover and allowed to run rampant in Palestinian towns and villages by the Israeli occupying forces, continue to perpetrate crimes against the Palestinian people and their land and properties. Indeed, the ongoing settler attacks against Palestinians can be attributed to a culture of violence and extremism that the Israeli Government has permitted with its continuation of its illegal settlement campaign throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

The most recent incident involves a vicious attack that took place yesterday, Tuesday, 4 May 2010, by armed Israeli settlers who entered a Palestinian village, Al-Lubban Al-Sharqiyya in the Occupied West Bank, which is surrounded by three illegal settlements: "Eli", "Shilo" and "Ma'ale Levona'. After entering the village, Israeli settlers broke into the only mosque in the village, setting it ablaze, destroying the building along with prayer rugs and a collection of Holy Korans that had been deliberately arranged in two piles before being burned in the fire. As stated by President Mahmoud Abbas, this criminal act of seting a holy mosque ablaze "represents a threat to the efforts to revive the peace process".

This latest attack is only one of many criminal acts committed in recent months by illegal Israeli settlers, who have targeted other mosques in the surrounding villages of Yasouf, Awartah and Hawwara. In addition, settlers have been involved in other violent and destructive acts against the Palestinian people and their property. Just a couple of days ago, on 3 May 2010, in the village of Hawwara, Israeli settlers set fire to an olive grove, destroying some 50 trees, which

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had been providing Palestinian farmers and their families with their livelihood and sustenance. Moreover, last week, a flood of raw sewage from the adjacent illegal Israeli settlement of "Kfar Etzion" destroyed vineyards and contaminated the drinking water of the civilian population in the village of Beit Ummar. The pipe was deliberately unscrewed by hand, destroying 70,000 square metres of a vineyard belonging to a Palestinian family. The same criminal act occurred in the Palestinian village of Bruqin, in the northern West Bank, which was also flooded by sewage from the nearby illegal Israeli settlement of "Ariel", resulting in contamination of underground water and springs and destroying Palestinian crops. Moreover, to add to the list of settler crimes, on 28 April 2010, two Palestinian boys, 11-year-old Muhammed Al-Ruwaeidi and 12-year-old Mustafa Al-Julani, were brutally beaten by settlers. They were admitted to the hospital with injuries.

The escalation of settler violence and terror over the years, and in particular over the last six months, can indisputably be attributed to illegal Israeli decisions and measures regarding continued illegal settlement construction and expansion as well as the intensification of all other illegal colonization measures, including the continued construction of the Wall, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel's illegal settlement colonization campaign and the settlers residing within the settlements are funded, protected, and armed by the Israeli Government, which has transferred them and enabled them to live in these illegal settlements in grave breach of international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, and which allows them to commit such crimes against defenceless Palestinians throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory with absolute impunity. Israel, the occupying Power, bears full responsibility for the illegal presence and all the illegal actions of the settlers, including deadly violence, terror, harassment and intimidation against Palestinian civilians and their properties. In this regard, we call on the international community to apply the necessary pressure on the Israeli Government to immediately bring an end to the terror campaign being perpetuated by illegal settlers against the Palestinian civilian population and their properties under occupation.

Moreover, turning to other illegal, condemnable Israeli actions throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the situation in the besieged Gaza Strip remains critical as a result of the continuing inhumane, illegal Israeli blockade, which has had an adverse impact on the viability of all aspects of Palestinian life. Besides the deplorable humanitarian situation that continues to prevail in Gaza as a result of that blockade, the occupying Power also continues to commit other violations, such as the demolition of the Al-Dahniya Mosque in Rafah yesterday, 4 May 2010. Also on 28 April 2010, occupying forces shot and killed Ahmed Suleiman Salem Deeb, 20 years old, during a peaceful civilian march in the city of Khan Yunis, which was organized by the popular campaign against the Israeli buffer zone.

We also regret to bring to your attention the death of Raed Abu Hammad, who died on 16 April 2010 in an Israeli prison as hundreds of Palestinians took to the streets of villages and towns across the West Bank and Gaza to commemorate Palestinian Prisoners' Day. Mr. Hammad was beaten by Israeli prison guards and was found dead in his solitary confinement cell. The reported cause of death was "a blow to the lower spinal cord with direct hit". According to reports, Mr. Hammad, one of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, is the 198th Palestinian prisoner to die in Israeli prisons since the onset of the Israeli occupation in 1967.

The above situation requires urgent attention by the international community to help to bring an end to both the illegal and provocative actions of Israel, the occupying Power, as well as those perpetrated by the illegal settlers it protects. This is necessary to prevent such extremist and radical settlers from inflaming the situation on the ground and thus undermining the slim opportunity before us to revive the peace process towards achievement of its stated goals. In this regard, the international community, including the Security Council, must exert timely efforts to uphold its responsibilities and legal obligations to protect and enforce international law and halt any Israeli action that further threatens the prospects for achieving the two-State solution for peace.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 367 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 16 April 2010 (A/ES-10/488-S/2010/190), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations